Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol
The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Dydd Mercher, 5 Mawrth 2014
Wednesday, 5 March 2014

Cynnwys
Contents

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Leighton Andrews	Llafur
	Labour
Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru
	Welsh Liberal Democrats
Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor)
	Labour (Committee Chair)
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru
	The Party of Wales
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
	Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur
	Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
	Welsh Conservatives
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur
	Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur
	Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru
	The Party of Wales

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Mike Cavanagh	Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Diwylliannol, Cyngor Sir Penfro
	Head of Cultural Services, Pembrokeshire County Council
Jane Davies	Uwch Reolwr, Gwasanaethau Diwylliannol, Cyngor Sir Gâr
	Senior Cultural Services Manager, Carmarthenshire County Council
Mark Jewell	Reolwr Gwasanaethau Llyfrgell, Cyngor Sir Gâr
	Library Services Manager, Carmarthenshire County Council

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Sarah Beasley	Clerc
	Clerk
Leanne Hatcher	Dirprwy Glerc
	Deputy Clerk
Robin Wilkinson	Ymchwilydd
	Researcher

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 08:59.
The meeting began at 08:59

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1]   **Christine Chapman:** Good morning, and welcome to the National Assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. We do not have any apologies this morning.

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod ar gyfer Eitemau 3 a 4
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting for Items 3 and 4

[2]   **Christine Chapman:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public for items 3 and 4 of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

[3]   I see that Members are content to do so.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 08:59.
The public part of the meeting ended at 08:59.

Ailymgynullodd y pwyllgor yn gyhoeddus am 11:02.
The committee reconvened in public at 11:02.

Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 6
Inquiry into Public Libraries in Wales: Evidence Session 6

[4]   **Christine Chapman:** I welcome everyone back. This is our inquiry into public libraries in Wales, and this is our sixth evidence session. I warmly welcome our panel this morning. We have Mike Cavanagh, head of cultural services, Pembrokeshire County Council, Jane Davies, senior cultural services manager, Carmarthenshire County Council, and Mark Jewell, library services manager, Carmarthenshire County Council. Thank you for attending. The Members have read the paper that you have submitted. So, if you are happy, we will go straight into questions.

[5]   We are looking at the role of libraries. Could you expand upon 'community-managed libraries' and on what various forms these libraries can take? I do not know who wants to start. Would you like to start, Mike?

[6]   **Mr Cavanagh:** A community-managed library can mean a number of different things. In terms of the English experience, Locality wrote a report in January last year for the arts council, and it defined five different models of what a community-managed library might be. Some of you may have seen that. It can be anything from a completely independent library, which is totally independent of the authority and has its own building, or it leases a building, and has no access to the wider county stock nor to professional advice, through to one of the more common models that we are seeing, which is sort of a hybrid model where the front line is delivered by volunteers but there is professional advice and varying levels of support, depending on the authority's approach to community-managed libraries. So, the latter is more of a mixed partnership. There is also a more of a local-authority-managed service, where there are paid staff working alongside volunteers. So, you have quite a broad spectrum.

[7]   **Christine Chapman:** I understand that you have some background in that field, Mike.

[8]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Yes, I have worked in England and I have delivered a couple of

different community-managed libraries. I have also done a piece of research into the effectiveness of community-managed libraries over the last two and a half years.

[9]   **Christine Chapman:** I will move on now to other Members so that we can develop these themes. Jenny, did you want to come in?

[10]   **Jenny Rathbone:** You say that these community-managed libraries do not work in all communities. What are the key features of a sustainable community-managed library in your view?

[11]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Sustainability is one of the key issues, and that seems to vary widely across England, certainly, and it is starting to occur in Wales. The issue in England is that there are no national standards, so there is a real vacuum there in terms of performance guidance. So, different authorities and different community-managed libraries approach the issue differently. To a certain extent, it depends on whether the authority deems the library to be part of its statutory responsibilities or not. Usually, what will happen is that if it believes that the library is part of its statutory make-up, it tends to give more support. So, it may give professional support and advice; it may lease the building on a peppercorn; it may community-asset transfer a building and give access to wider county stock. However, if it perceives that that library is not part of its statutory provision, and if it can deliver that comprehensive and efficient definition without that library, then it will tend to be more stand-offish. Really, those are then the libraries that are in more danger because they are the ones that are awake at night worrying about how they are going to pay the electricity bill, for instance, because they do not necessarily have that support that other libraries have. It is that real mixed bag that we see across England, where, because there are no standards, everyone is taking a different approach. So, some are doing well and some are doing very badly. It is questionable whether they will remain sustainable.

[12]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Looking at the situation in your areas, in your rural communities, is there any particular reason why a library run out of a pub or a shop would not be able to count on professional support and provision just because it happens to be run out of premises that are not owned by the local authority?

[13]   **Mr Cavanagh:** No, I think that the building is pretty irrelevant, really. It comes down to the approach taken by the authority.

[14]   **Christine Chapman:** Would Mark or Jane like to come in before we move on?

[15]   **Mr Jewell:** With regard to the pub or the shop that you were talking about, it could be a collection of books that are selected by professional staff that are available—treating that pub or shop as a hub, possibly, if it was in a densely populated area.

[16]   **Jenny Rathbone:** In your paper, you talk about possibly transferring a couple of your libraries to schools. I wonder whether you can envisage, with the community focus that schools are supposed to have, that that should make any difference in terms of the availability to the public at large in that community? Obviously, there would be some restrictions in terms of the hours during which the public could come in to browse the library, but in terms of being able to access the stock and the advice, that is another way in which the whole community could access library services.

[17]   **Mr Jewell:** We have one such library in Ysgol y Bedol in Garnant, Brynaman way in Carmarthenshire. It is not a huge success in as much as members of the public do not seem to be using the service. The school sees it as a success because, obviously, it uses it between 8.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. during the school day, but out-of-hours, it is poorly utilised as a service.

[18]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Do you think that that is because it has not been properly branded as 'this is your community library'?

[19]   **Mr Jewell:** It has been branded. It has been there for a number of years now. The service itself is excellent; the facility is excellent, as is the IT equipment—there is Wi-Fi—but we feel that the restriction may be that it is in a community school building and that some people have a barrier to re-entering this type of establishment.

[20]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, so some specific outreach might be needed to get the whole community to use it.

[21]   **Mr Jewell:** We have a mobile service that operates not far from this facility, which does extremely well.

[22]   **Jenny Rathbone:** My final question was—

[23]   **Christine Chapman:** Jenny, before you come back, Mike has a supplementary question. I will bring you back after that.

[24]   **Mike Hedges:** Often with schools and other places, where it is physically located within the building has a bigger effect than just being in the building. Where is the library that you are talking about physically located? Is it the very first place you come to in the building? In Swansea, for example, at St Thomas Community Primary School, the library is attached to the school. It is a public library and the library and the school are in the same building, but the first building you come to is the library. So, is the first place you come to in the school the library, or do you have to go through other places?

[25]   **Mr Jewell:** No. When you arrive at the car park—the entrance—of Ysgol y Bedol, you have the reception to the school in front of you, and then it is stated that the public areas are to your left—they have other facilities there, such as a community hall and so forth.

[26]   **Mr Cavanagh:** The experience is that libraries in schools tend not to do as well as if they are not in schools. That is not always the case, but the reason seems to be an attitudinal one, in that some customers do not want to go to a school site. Obviously there are safeguarding issues, and you need to make sure that those are all covered, but then there is this attitudinal barrier, and I have found, certainly in authorities that I have worked in, that they tend not to do as well.

[27]   **Christine Chapman:** Jane, did you want to add to that?

[28]   **Ms Davies:** No, I am quite happy, thanks.

[29]   **Christine Chapman:** I know that Rhodri wants to come in, and I will then go back to Jenny.

[30]   **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Ar y pwynt ynglŷn ag Ysgol y Bedol, roeddech yn dweud bod mannau cyhoeddus eraill sy'n gysylltiedig â'r ysgol. A yw'r defnydd o'r llyfrgell—yr hyn a ddisgrifiwyd gennych fel defnydd siomedig—yn adlewyrchu'r defnydd o fannau cyhoeddus eraill, ynteu ai'r llyfrgell yn unig na ddefnyddir gan y cyhoedd i'r graddau y byddech yn gobeithio?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: On the point about Ysgol y Bedol, you said that there are other public areas that are linked with that school. Does the use of the library, which you have described as being disappointing, reflect the use of the other public areas, or is it the library alone that is not used by the public to the extent that you would wish?

[31] **Mr Jewell:** Nid wyf yn siŵr, a dweud y gwir. Nid wyf yn gallu ateb am y mannau eraill, ond ar y llyfrgell, byddwn yn dweud mai tua dau neu dri ym mhob awr y mae ar agor sy'n defnyddio'r llyfrgell.

Mr Jewell: I am not sure, to be honest. I cannot answer for the other areas, but for the library, I would say that it is used by about two or three for every hour of opening.

[32] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just wanted to pick up on the comments that your paper mentioned, Mike, about the current draft of the new Welsh library standards, which makes it clear that the replacement of staff with volunteers is not acceptable under any circumstances. I just wondered if you could clarify that, because that sounds very strange in the context of the community libraries that we have just been speaking about.

[33] **Mr Cavanagh:** It has actually changed. That was a draft. The fifth framework has just been issued, and there is a very significant change in that section. It no longer says what it said in my paper. Now it very much opens the door for the sorts of community-managed libraries that we have been talking about, but very much around the supportive approach. So, it talks about things like the fact that it would expect paid staff to work alongside volunteers, and it would expect professional advice. So, if you think about that plethora of different community libraries that we talked about at the start, with one being completely separate from the authority and getting no support, these standards would be a barrier to achieving that kind of model, but they would support the other models.

[34] **Jenny Rathbone:** It still would not meet the model of a library being run out of a pub or a shop, where effectively the people who are safeguarding the library are volunteers in the context of the library service, are they not?

[35] **Mr Cavanagh:** I think that it is open to debate. This only came out a couple of days ago, so to a certain extent it is how you read it. I think that it is possible. The key thing here is that Welsh Government wants to see supported, community-managed libraries. I think that that is good and right. It does not want to see libraries completely exposed and left on their own, and I think that that is what these standards do.

[36] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Just on the back of that, though, do they want to see fewer libraries in the main, and a higher standard in libraries? Are we going to see a decline in the number of small libraries that keep local residents happy, provide books, provide computer equipment, but do not go to high digital or e-books and things, and do not have a very professional image? Are we looking at there being a lot fewer libraries, but much more all-singing, all-dancing libraries?

[37] **Mr Cavanagh:** Within the public library standards and this fifth framework, the same kinds of requirements have been maintained around the percentage of the population of Wales that is within a certain distance of a library. That would suggest that they are looking to try to maintain libraries, to keep them open wherever possible. Having said that, there are occasions when it is deemed appropriate that a library could close if it has very limited usage, or the population trends have moved on, or there is a new development and it is just in the wrong place. There may be reasons, occasionally. The simple answer to your question is that there is likely to remain roughly the same number of libraries. It is more likely that libraries will go to community management rather than be closed. It is much more difficult to reopen a library if it is completely gone. I would rather see it maybe reduce its opening hours, maybe have less stock or use volunteers, than see it completely go.

[38] **Ms Davies:** This brings us on to the example that we have in Carmarthenshire in Pontyates library. In around 2011, we were looking at various branches of the network and the council took the decision that four branches could potentially be closed, and went out to public consultation on that.

[39]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** The balloon went up.

11:15

[40]   **Ms Davies:** The balloon went up, most definitely, yes. At the same time, it provided us with a route to look at two of the libraries, two of the branches, and we brought in, at that stage, the opportunity for volunteers to work alongside the professional service. Our example is almost a partnership example, really, which is about volunteers being supported by professional library staff back at a far larger town library. That, for us, was an opportunity to keep that library open and provide a service. That library, I believe that I am right in saying, Mark, was open for fewer than 10 hours a week at that point in time anyway. I think that it was open for around eight hours a week.

[41]   **Mr Jewell:** Yes.

[42]   **Ms Davies:** It gave us the opportunity to maintain that branch in that locality.

[43]   **Mr Jewell:** The hours have extended under the volunteer system, to nine and a half hours.

[44]   **Ms Davies:** So, it is still very much there. It is not costing us very much at all. We include it as part of our statutory provision, because that is our opportunity to ensure that we maintain a standard of service delivery at that library as part of the service level agreement that we have in place with the volunteers who are working there.

[45]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** A little question on the end of that: am I right that a community group, if it is properly constituted, can actually draw down grant funding that, sometimes, local authorities cannot, if it has the wherewithal to do that?

[46]   **Ms Davies:** Potentially, yes, that is right.

[47]   **Christine Chapman:** I have a supplementary question from Rhodri before we move on.

[48]   **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** O ran y llyfrgell ym Mhont-iets, roeddwn i yno yn ddiweddar ac mae'n cynnig gwasanaeth arbennig o dda ac ystod eithaf eang. Fodd bynnag, beth yn union yw'r bartneriaeth hon gyda'r llyfrgell sydd yn dod yn uniongyrchol dan gyfrifoldeb yr awdurdod? A allwch chi amlinellu sut mae'r bartneriaeth honno yn gweithio? Beth yn union a gynigir fel cefnogaeth i'r gwirfoddolwyr sy'n cadw'r gwasanaeth i fynd ym Mhont-iets?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In terms of the library in Pontyates, I was there recently and it offers an especially good service and quite a wide range. However, what exactly is this partnership with the library that comes directly under the authority's responsibility? Can you outline how that partnership works? What exactly does it offer in terms of support to the volunteers who keep the service going in Pontyates?

[49]   **Mr Jewell:** Rydym ni'n darparu llyfrau i'r gwasanaeth. Bob chwarter, rydym yn newid y llyfrau ym Mhont-iets. Mae *training* i'r staff yn mynd ymlaen ac rydym ar gael ar y ffôn bob awr y mae ar agor. Mae'r dechnoleg sydd ar gael yn yr adeilad yn cael ei ddarparu gan y sir. Llyfrgell Caerfyrddin sydd â chyfrifoldeb dros lyfrgell

Mr Jewell: We provide books to the service. Every quarter, we change the books in Pontyates. Staff training is provided and we are at the other end of the phone every hour that it is open. The technology that is there in the building is provided by the county. Carmarthen library is responsible for Pontyates library. The stock has been chosen

Bont-iets. Mae'r stoc wedi cael ei ddewis gan staff proffesiynol, mae'n cael ei ddarparu i'r gwasanaeth a hefyd y gefnogaeth *IT* ac unrhyw *training* a fyddai ei angen ar y *volunteers* i ddarparu'r gwasanaeth.

by professional staff and is provided to the service as is the IT support and any training that is needed by the volunteers to provide the service.

[50]   **Christine Chapman:** Peter, I think that you wanted to come in.

[51]   **Peter Black:** Yes. I want to explore the situation in Wales, but, first of all, in terms of where you have models of working with volunteers, how sustainable are those models in terms of the turnover of volunteers and training volunteers? Do you find that volunteers burn out after a certain time and how do you replace them?

[52]   **Mr Jewell:** The Pontyates model is probably a good example to answer that question. There has been no turnover; they are the same people who started off there originally. There are other models that the county has had: Tumble, for example, had a community-led library, much as Pontyates does, but that failed to continue. The volunteers moved away and felt that they could not continue with that service and they were looking for a more IT-based service. There was a greater emphasis on IT within the Tumble element than on book stock.

[53]   **Peter Black:** Obviously, these models are coming from financial pressures as opposed to being models that you might, philosophically, want to move to. So, when you start to look at remodelling your service, to what extent do you rely on mobile library provision, or is that going out of fashion?

[54]   **Mr Jewell:** If you go back to the value-for-money element in the first part of the question, I do not think that that was the main emphasis with regard to these libraries and how Pontyates first became a community one. It was more that the use of that service was so extremely low at that time and then, yes, it did relate to the cost, because the cost per issue was hugely excessive for the standard of service that we were giving. That is why, I think, the volunteer model—

[55]   **Peter Black:** However, where we are now is that the growth of these types of arrangements is mostly financially driven.

[56]   **Mr Jewell:** Yes, that is right.

[57]   Sorry, you asked about the mobile service—

[58]   **Peter Black:** Yes. Is the mobile service going out of fashion? Is it being replaced by these sorts of models?

[59]   **Mr Jewell:** The mobile library service is more limited, inasmuch as it does not offer technology. It offers purely a book service and maybe reservation, where you can book a book ahead and it will come within the next fortnight to you through that service.

[60]   **Peter Black:** The use of libraries is now moving towards technology-based usage. I went into the new Bridgend Library last week, and there was a massive computer screen on which you can look at magazines and stuff like that. It is very impressive technology. Also, there is the use of Wi-Fi, access to music, and other things like that. Do you think that mobile libraries are sort of old hat, or as a sort of place where—

[61]   **Mr Jewell:** They are, slightly, but I think that, within certain parts of the community, they are still respected and seen as vital. Where there is an ageing population, possibly, there might be greater use.

[62]   **Peter Black:** Those who still read books.

[63]   **Mr Cavanagh:** We have just undertaken a review of our mobile service, and we have a proposal out for consultation. The consultation actually finished last week. We are looking to cease to deliver our mobile service, because we think that it is very much out of date. It started in the 1950s. It has not changed, really, since then. The levels of car ownership are far higher, as is the digital side in terms of access to e-books. We are looking at a model. The proposal is to seek to protect the most vulnerable in society. So, people who really cannot get to a static library would have a housebound personal service into their homes; but also, as part of that, we are piloting an e-reader scheme with those individuals to show them that there are some significant benefits, if they can get over that concern with digital. An e-reader is very light, if people have difficulty in reading a heavy book, you can change the font size, and it can even read to you. So, there are many advantages for very elderly people. We are delivering that work at the moment.

[64]   **Jocelyn Davies:** Will your staff go into someone's home to show them how to use an e-reader?

[65]   **Mr Cavanagh:** It could be staff, or it could be volunteers. There are different models of how you can do that. The Royal Voluntary Service is a common partner.

[66]   **Jocelyn Davies:** It will be someone who is trained to do it.

[67]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Yes; absolutely.

[68]   **Mr Jewell:** There is an online element to that as well, where you can access the online service and then have that part of the service delivered.

[69]   **Peter Black:** In terms of the Welsh context, are you aware of how many community-managed libraries there are in Wales? Is this a model where we are expecting to see a growth in that particular type of library over the next few years?

[70]   **Mr Cavanagh:** It is very small at the moment. There is obviously the one that colleagues talked about. There are not very many more that I am aware of; so, there is a handful.

[71]   **Peter Black:** I think that there will be one in Neath Port Talbot soon.

[72]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Over the next year, that will start to grow. I think that the model will be very much like what happened in England, because the same driver applies: very severe financial cuts with a very steep profile of when they are to be delivered. So, over the next year to two years, you can imagine schemes, certainly up to 50 or 60, I would think.

[73]   **Peter Black:** Is England ahead of us in this field, in terms of establishing it, given that it had financial pressures much earlier than we did?

[74]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Yes. There are around 400 community-managed libraries in England. That changes practically on a daily basis.

[75]   **Peter Black:** In terms of when you model your own service, are you looking to the English model to learn lessons from what they have done, or are you merely starting from scratch?

[76]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Absolutely. That is what my research was about. In England, they

had to do it very quickly because of financial constraints. There were no public library standards in place. So, that combination of having to do it very quickly and not having any kind of guidance and direction means that you have a whole mixed bag—a variety. There has been some bad practice. There has been some good practice, but there has been some bad practice and we can learn from that.

[77]   **Christine Chapman:** Did you want to come in, Janet?

[78]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes. Going back to the community model, currently there is one—I raised it yesterday, and I am putting it on record here—namely Penrhyn Bay library, which has been a library for years, and the residents want it. However, they would like to see improvements, obviously, in years to come, but they have set up this group now. They have managed to take some funding from their community council—Llandudno Town Council—some support from the local authority, and then their own sort of support. So, it is a partnership approach. I think that it is fair to say that I have seen some groups in other community assets where, if they have not had support, they feel that they are not professional enough. I have asked the Minister this question, but what guidance are we providing to our local authorities across Wales so that these people are set off at the beginning so that they do not become demoralised? It is so that they are given training, help and support so that they can start off on the right footing and have a sustainable model.

[79]   **Mr Jewell:** In terms of the example that we have in Pontyates, we have a service level agreement with the volunteers and the community council. So, the building is given over free by the community council; so, basically funded by it. The volunteer time is obviously free to that element. In terms of Carmarthenshire County Council, as I said earlier we fund the stock, the IT, and any developments within that service. All of the training that any front-line library worker would get within the county is also delivered at the volunteer level, and they are kept up to date with equal opportunities and anything else that goes on within that authority.

[80]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Finally, if they want to become more ambitious and start to draw down their own grant funding—which can be quite complex, but it can help to draw in money from outside the local authority—is support available?

[81]   **Mr Jewell:** Yes, it would be, and we would encourage that in order to develop that service.

[82]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Brilliant.

[83]   **Ms Davies:** May I add to that? Coming back to the framework, you are very much talking in terms of advice from the Minister. To my knowledge, we have the public library standards to work within, but it is then very much up to the individual authority to make those arrangements on a local basis. So, you could still be talking about a different approach across each of the 22 local authorities in Wales.

[84]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** How do you think we can get a consistent approach across them all?

[85]   **Ms Davies:** That is the difficult question, is it not?

[86]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Two things need to happen. The first is something that should be done by the Welsh Government, which relates to the need for standards on a site-by-site level. At the moment, the public library standards are service standards. So, they are about a whole-library service. However, community-managed libraries are individual local libraries.

[87]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, and each one is different.

[88]   **Mr Cavanagh:** If you think about the museum domain, there are many hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteer-delivered museums. There is a much greater history of engagement with volunteers in the museum sector. They have museum accreditation. That is a quality standard for a museum, and it has been the glue that has bound what would otherwise be a very disparate group of museums—independent museums, as well as local authority, national and regimental museums, et cetera. So, a set of quality standards by site is critical, in my view, and it needs to happen very quickly, because these changes are happening very quickly. That is the first thing, and that is what I believe the Welsh Government needs to do.

[89]   In terms of what local authorities can do, they need to be looking at sustainable models. So, for instance, the services that I delivered—the community-managed libraries I delivered in England—were delivered in partnership with, in one case, a parish council, which can set a precept, so it has a means of generating income and is sustainable, and, in another case, was delivered with a private sector organisation that had a very strong sense of corporate social responsibility—the co-operative. So, when you partner with such organisations, you build in sustainability, whereas if you just have a group with no means of generating income other than fundraising, you really are in risky waters.

[90]   The third aspect is professional advice and ongoing support. Once again, looking at the museum sector, if you look at what happened in England, one of the great things that happened under the Renaissance programme over the last decade, which sadly has had to reduce its funding, is that central Government funded a network of museum development officers, who were there to provide ongoing professional advice, support, training, and help with getting funding to independent museums. A model like that of library development officers could really help the people of Wales in terms of raising standards.

[91]   **Christine Chapman:** I believe that Gwyn has a supplementary question on that point.

[92]   **Gwyn R. Price:** In your opinion, are the volunteers and the organisations that are looking for funding fully aware that this is available to them?

[93]   **Mr Cavanagh:** I am sorry; fully aware that what is available to them?

[94]   **Gwyn R. Price:** All of the funding out there. They do not know which avenues to go down.

[95]   **Mr Cavanagh:** No, they do not know which avenues are open to them. With quite a lot of charitable trusts, although they say that they will fund only charities, when you look at it, quite a lot will fund local government. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, for instance, says that it funds only charities, but I have had money out of it for local government. So, to a certain extent, I am not sure quite how true it is that, if you are a community group, you can access lots of different funding that local government cannot. There will be some, but it might not be as many as we think. However, you are right: they do not know where they are, and they do not necessarily have the skills to write a strong application and compete, and that is where the professional advice is really critical.

[96]   **Gwyn R. Price:** Yes, that is where professional advice is required, so that we are all working together to achieve the same aim of keeping a library open in some form as the way forward.

[97]   **Christine Chapman:** On the back of this, I would like to ask whether there is a danger that, if you have volunteers—even in terms of museums—there would be

inconsistency and differences in different areas. In more affluent areas, they may have more of a pool of volunteers, for example. Have you noticed this at all, Mike? Is there a danger in that regard?

[98]   **Mr Cavanagh:** It has happened and it is happening. The model tends to work better in more affluent rural areas. It tends to be pot luck. Some of the libraries that responded to my research said, 'We are very lucky, we have an ex-professional librarian who has decided to volunteer', but other libraries have not had that. So, some have really struggled and closed. A couple in Northumberland closed because the group members fell out with each other. These things can happen. It is a bit of a worry.

[99]   **Jocelyn Davies:** Who volunteers to run a library?

11:30

[100]   **Mr Cavanagh:** All the evidence suggests that it tends to be quite a narrow demographic. It tends to be elderly, usually retired, white females.

[101]   **Jocelyn Davies:** How old is elderly?

[102]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Retired white females. That tends to represent the vast majority of volunteers.

[103]   **Jocelyn Davies:** So, our picture of a librarian is those volunteering to be a librarian.

[104]   **Mr Cavanagh:** It is quite a narrow demographic, yes.

[105]   **Mr Jewell:** We have one gentleman.

[106]   **Jocelyn Davies:** We have a token man, have we?

[107]   **Mr Cavanagh:** There are risks around equality and diversity, and whether the library staff or volunteers are representative of the communities that they serve.

[108]   **Christine Chapman:** I have Leighton and then Jenny. Leighton?

[109]   **Leighton Andrews:** I want to ask a bit more about community-managed libraries. It seems that we are going to see more of this. I have an excellent project being developed in Mardy by a local councillor because of the problems that local authorities are having with finances. However, there are long traditions, particularly in mining communities, of libraries being run by the South Wales Miners' Federation, as it was, or local branches of that. So, in a sense, some of what now get called in jargon 'co-production skills' are coming back, arguably. Are professional librarians comfortable with that?

[110]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Not in the main, no. [*Laughter.*] There are two things that I would say about that. First, if you are around long enough, these things come round full circle, do they not? In the 1950s and early 1960s there was a big tradition of rural libraries managed by volunteers. The service became professionalised in the late 1960s and 1970s, and we are now potentially going back again. I am sure that, in 20 years' time, we will go back again to professional staff. So, there is a certain amount of that.

[111]   There are three reasons why some professional librarians are concerned about this model. The first one is that the profession is being attacked in some way, and that perception is based on the view that anyone can manage the library and anyone can issue a book. However, you would not have a volunteer teacher or a volunteer lawyer. So, there is an issue

or concern from some people.

[112]   The second reason is about the effect on staffing, in that staff are not only being made redundant, but humiliated by being told that their job is not actually worth anything, that it is not a job that they should be paid for and that a volunteer could do it. So, there are concerns there. Those are the moral and ethical concerns that you may or may not decide are important.

[113]   The third reason relates to the more professional concerns, which is: are volunteers any good? Will they be sustainable? Will they be able to deliver quality services? That is where professional librarians are a little bit concerned in Wales.

[114]   **Jenny Rathbone:** To pick up on the point made earlier, community-run libraries work well in affluent areas and are more difficult to run in areas that are more challenged. I accept Leighton's model absolutely, but, nevertheless, are your library services prioritising the areas of the community where there are less high levels of education, and where people need more encouragement to start reading and to diversify their acquisition of knowledge through reading?

[115]   **Mr Cavanagh:** What is happening is that, in deprived areas, there are very few community-managed libraries; I think there is one in a suburb of London, and maybe one or two others, but it tends to be quite difficult to get volunteers to them. So, those are areas that particularly need library services, because libraries are about so much more than books. Books are incredibly important, but they are about all the things you will have heard of in all your other interviews, which I will not go into in depth, around digital inclusion, et cetera. So, those communities really need libraries. Those are areas where I would seek to prioritise maintaining a professional service, because I think that there are serious risks around community management in those areas in terms of getting the volunteers in the first place. Experience has shown that it is difficult to find and maintain them in those areas. So, I would say that that would be a priority within my service.

[116]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Given that it is about services rather than buildings, how much attention is being paid to co-locating with other public services, such as the health centre and other hub services of advice in housing that exist in my community, for example?

[117]   **Mr Cavanagh:** There is quite a big tradition of co-location, but in Pembrokeshire we are going one step further, so, rather than just co-locating with another service, we are using the professional skills of librarians to fully take on another service. In Pembrokeshire, we are taking on tourist information, but rather than having a tourist information centre in a library, it is a library and information centre with generic-working staff. You do not have staff members on different pay grades with one wearing uniform and one not, reporting to different masters and with different job descriptions—it is one cohesive whole. There are other examples in library services where they take on benefit claims or police enquiries, because they harness the skills of librarians—librarians are fantastic at finding quality information; that is what they do. So, there are real opportunities for that kind of generic working, which can make significant savings as well, as a whole authority. In Pembrokeshire, for instance, we do not need as many buildings—we do not need tourist information centres and libraries and we do not need as many staff.

[118]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Do you think that your approach is typical of that of other local authorities?

[119]   **Ms Davies:** On the point that Mike was making about Pembrokeshire, from Carmarthenshire's perspective, co-location is becoming increasingly important. When we look at our stock of buildings and where we need to deliver our library services, co-location will always be up there in terms of the agenda. It becomes more of a community hub, for

argument's sake, that we are delivering from. Sorry, what was your other question?

[120]   **Jenny Rathbone:** It was really about whether this was typical of how all local authorities are approaching this issue. Libraries are an important aspect of public services, but they do not need to be in their own little silo.

[121]   **Ms Davies:** I do not know whether you can answer that.

[122]   **Mr Jewell:** There is merit in the idea. It all depends on the town that the library is serving or on the area that it serves. In some smaller communities, that would work really well, and, at the same time, we have had tourist information centres within libraries and they have been successful, and other services working outside. The main thing for libraries today is that they are social spaces; they are not seen as just libraries. They need to be seen as the hubs of the communities that they are there to serve, without a doubt.

[123]   **Jenny Rathbone:** So, you think that the approach that your two local authorities is driving forward is something that happens across all local authorities, or are you not able to comment?

[124]   **Mr Jewell:** I would say that, from conversations with colleagues across Wales—I would not be able to give any evidence of it—that seems to be the way that things are going.

[125]   **Jenny Rathbone:** How are you sharing good practice? Do you write up the successes that you are having in transforming your services or—

[126]   **Mr Cavanagh:** We have very strong partnership working. The Society of Chief Librarians meets regularly—that is the chief librarian of every authority. We have sub-groups, regional groups, and we work together with the support of CyMAL in the Welsh Government. We drive forward a lot of work in partnership in a way that other services do not—we are well ahead of the game on that. We are all well aware of what other authorities are doing and we share good practice. However, there are 22 different authorities and, of course, they will have different approaches.

[127]   **Jenny Rathbone:** So, the challenges that you face in Ysgol y Bedol, where the community is not using the library that is now available to it, might be an issue in other parts of Wales, where there are parents who never cross the front gate of a school because of their own bad experiences in school and so it takes more effort to get them to engage.

[128]   **Mr Jewell:** Yes. I think that maybe an example to counteract that would be that of St Clears, where an arts centre and the public library have got together in one building. Maybe Jane could tell us more about the grants and so forth. It is a renovated building and a new service, and it is extremely successful. So, you have the other side there. I think that it is dependent on the area and people's view on how they use it.

[129]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[130]   **Christine Chapman:** We will move on then. Mark, did you want to come in?

[131]   **Mark Isherwood:** The international evidence campaign for what Leighton describes as co-production is not a reaction to austerity. It predates credit crunch and is based on the belief that a community-owned dimension and a real equality of partnership of statutory providers can drive social and community regeneration. I wonder what your views are on that, and not where it is an either/or—community or council—but where there is a genuine co-production partnership with the expertise and support in the communities to drive social and community regeneration, not just in the affluent areas, but in the poorer areas where that

community dimension needs to be restored.

[132]   **Mr Cavanagh:** That kind of co-production model happens sometimes—not very often. What it needed—'needed' might be the wrong word—is the driver of the budget cuts that we are having. That has really driven and made that happen. So, the issue there is: is it carrot or is it stick? There have been a few examples of a carrot before the cuts, but, actually, it has been the stick, where authorities have had to say, 'We're going to close your library unless you volunteer'. There is a certain amount of coercion there, which is not a great start, but if you do not have that, why would the community take over a library and put in all of that effort, if it knows that the public purse is going to continue to deliver it? I do not know whether that answers your question.

[133]   **Mark Isherwood:** There are models all over the place—Australia, the United States of America and elsewhere—that were not necessarily the children of austerity, but were driven by a social model to help to regenerate communities. To what extent have you or others given consideration to this model as a means of tackling the problems where, often, there is the greatest need for community regeneration?

[134]   **Ms Davies:** In all honesty, the library services in Carmarthenshire are part of the leisure department, which is also part of the regeneration department, and we have tended to rely on colleagues on the regeneration side to look at models. Having said that, we are considering one example in Carmarthenshire—we have talked about a particularly poor area—where we are looking to create a hub based around the existing library building, with not necessarily just library services accommodating that building in the future. So, if I were to answer the question directly as to whether we have considered it previously, I would be inclined to say 'Perhaps not'. Having said that, I think that there is certainly an opportunity to consider that type of model for the future to enhance the community service that we offer, out of a review of library provision. Does that help?

[135]   **Mark Isherwood:** It is about enhancing the community itself by identifying connects within the communities—people who can connect with other people and drive the agenda forward. Should I say that it has become something of an international campaign, with big conferences being held across Wales, although it is very encouraging? [*Laughter.*]

[136]   **Christine Chapman:** Rhodri, did you want to come in?

[137]   **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Yn gynharach, fe wnaethoch chi ddweud bod y math o bobl sy'n gwirfoddoli ar gyfer rhedeg llyfrgelloedd cymunedol yn gyfyngedig iawn o ran cynrychioli'r boblogaeth yn ei chyfanrwydd. A oes perygl bod y bobl hynny'n tueddu i gynnig y math o wasanaeth y byddent hwy am gael o lyfrgell, ac felly nad yw'n wasanaeth sy'n mynd i apelio y tu hwnt i'r math hwnnw o bobl?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you, Chair. Earlier on, you said that the kind of people who volunteer to run community-managed libraries was very restricted in terms of representing the population as a whole. Is there a danger that those people tend to offer the kinds of services that they would want to receive from a library, and therefore it is not a service that will appeal beyond that demographic of people?

[138]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Yes. There is that danger. I think that it is evidenced in the literature and it is evidenced in my experience. If we think back to the seminal book on how to create community-managed libraries, which was written by Fox in the States in 1999, one of the things that she said was be careful to avoid becoming a 'cosy little group', in her terms—that sort of clique. There are very few areas that have one homogenous community. When we talk about community, what do we mean? Usually, it is one aspect of the community, one part of it, and maybe the dominant part, that will volunteer. The risk is what their attitudes and

behaviours are around, say, the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Does that mean that the library might be physically accessible, but it might not be attitudinally accessible? So, that is the literature.

[139]   What I have found, certainly in one area in England, was that there were serious concerns that a new community-managed library had been created and there were concerns over the community's attitude towards migrant communities from eastern Europe. That concern was happening at the time that I left, so I do not know how that was dealt with, but there were some concerns.

[140]   In terms of my research, because there were no public library standards in England, one of the things that I wanted to try to get a feel for was what the participant groups, volunteers and chief librarians considered were criteria of effectiveness—what makes for a good public library? There were 30 criteria that were put together. One of those was whether the volunteers were representative of the communities that they served. That criterion came in at 29 out of 30 in order of importance. They did not see it as important at all, which I think is quite telling.

11:45

[141]   **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Is there also a danger when a situation arises when a library that used to be run by the local authority is under threat of closure, and volunteers decide that there is a need to save that service and they come together and establish a community-managed library, that there will be a problem after five, six or seven years when those people say, 'Well, that's it, we've made our contribution'? Where will the next volunteers come from? That is the danger with this kind of community enterprise—it is dependent on a small group of people who come together and say, 'Well, we need to save this service', but there is no continuity to it then. How do you ensure that that service continues, or are we going to see community-managed libraries opening and then after five, six or seven years closing, because there are no further volunteers willing to come forward to offer that service?

[142]   **Mr Jewell:** That has happened to us in Carmarthenshire, as I said earlier, in Tumble and in Dafen. Local people from the community did come together to develop one under the Dafen forum. Eleven people came forward originally to run that library, but it failed in a matter of months to be honest. So, yes, that is a fact.

[143]   **Christine Chapman:** I remind Members and witnesses that we have just over 10

minutes left. I know that we have covered a lot of ground, so I am just going to ask Members to indicate if they want to ask any further questions. I know that we have covered some of the themes as well. So, who would like to come in? I shall go to Mike, as a starting point.

[144]   **Mike Hedges:** I have two points. The first one is that I was thinking of the St Thomas library in Swansea, which is physically attached to the school, but it is separate from the school. So, you go into the library—it is not a volunteer library; it is a proper council library—and although the building is attached to the school, it has a separate entrance. Have you considered that for school-based libraries that are open to the public, where they actually have a separate entrance?

[145]   **Mr Jewell:** Ysgol y Bedol is built on that same principle. There are two entrances to the front: one to the school and one to the library.

[146]   **Mike Hedges:** The other question that I was going to ask you is about recruitment, training and support. It is about what Rhodri Glyn Thomas talked about earlier, namely the danger of having a small clique getting together to run it. This happens in lots of organisations and why should volunteer libraries be any different? That may exclude others who may be willing, but who are not quite as pushy, if I can use that word, as some of those who have taken over. How do you try to build on recruitment and when you get them there, how can you give them training and support for them to know what they cannot do? One of the great difficulties for a lot of people in life is knowing what they cannot do. If they cannot provide a full, professional library service, they should know when to say, 'You now need to go to X library if you really want to undertake this research because I cannot help you anymore'.

[147]   **Mr Jewell:** What we have in Carmarthenshire, if I can give that example, is a scheme that is written out and agreed by the authority and then we have the role highlighted for volunteers, including what the volunteers can expect from the library service, what the library service expects from the volunteers, and the training, the support and the CAVS agreement, which is the Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services, which brings it all together. So, it is documented and then we go through that as part of the induction training with all volunteers. That is how we have conducted that in Pont-iets.

[148]   **Mike Hedges:** However, the point I was trying to get across is that there are things that a volunteer librarian cannot do that a fully qualified librarian can. It is about having that stage when the people who are volunteering know when to say, 'You now need to go to X library to see a librarian because they are the person who can help you and I can't help you anymore'.

[149]   **Mr Jewell:** That is commonplace, to be fair, as it operates now and they do redirect that service to neighbouring services such as Llanelli and Carmarthen from Pont-iets. That is good practice.

[150]   **Christine Chapman:** Mike wants to come in.

[151]   **Mr Cavanagh:** There are some really interesting points in terms of training that I have found because there seems to be a need for a balancing act. On the one hand, what this research showed was that the perceived need for training was much higher than the amount of training that had taken place, and that quite a lot of the training was of an informal nature, on the ground, in the library. It is really interesting because there was quite a lot of evidence to show that there are some real gaps in training around things that you would think really ought to be part of universal training, such as data protection—that is, volunteers understanding that they cannot just tell someone down the street what someone else is borrowing and what their address is—and things like that which are crucial. That was, across the board, including customer service training and so on, but, equally, some volunteers were saying that if there

was too much training, it would put them off. They do not want too much training, so, maybe they do not necessarily all buy into the concept that libraries are about more than lending books. So, there is a balancing act between wanting to give them enough training, to make sure that they do a quality service, but not putting them off from volunteering.

[152]   **Christine Chapman:** May I ask what may be quite a difficult question, really? A number of you have said that budget cuts have obviously driven this. In an ideal world, if there was plenty of money around, would you always want a professional service or would there be room—and I think that this goes back to Mark's point, really—for a voluntary-led service, or should it always be professional? Mike.

[153]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Before the cuts we engaged with volunteers in the authority where I worked in England. We did that through co-production to enhance opening hours. So, we had a community library that was not open very much—around 12 hours a week—but we could not afford to open it more. So, we engaged with the community and we created a group of friends of that library. They came in on two days a week and volunteered, so it enhanced the opening hours. If there were not any cuts, I would still be looking to do that because it just makes good sense; it gives community groups a sense of purpose. The benefits for individuals may be tackling social isolation et cetera through volunteering, but it does not threaten the professional nature of the service. For me, that is a marriage made in heaven.

[154]   **Christine Chapman:** Do you wish to come in, Jane or Mark?

[155]   **Ms Davies:** Yes. Actually, I was going to say very much a similar thing. I think that there is always room for co-production, essentially. There is always room for alternative models of delivery. We will provide a comprehensive and efficient service and we can go that step further, really, providing that the resource is there. Therefore, I would be inclined to agree.

[156]   **Mr Jewell:** I think that co-location also goes a long way to assist that if it is led by another service. We are putting radio-frequency identification self-service machines in lots of our community libraries now so that they can remain open for longer and people can have access to stock virtually, without a person being there. So, it is also driven by the service that is sharing the building. It extends the length of time and the access to materials.

[157]   **Christine Chapman:** I have Mark, Peter and then Jenny who want to come in.

[158]   **Mark Isherwood:** Co-production is not volunteer-led; it is a partnership of equality, co-designing and co-delivering together. So, it is breaking down the barriers, but we need both sides at the table—a round table. Get away from that volunteer-led thing, which was a different thing. The voluntarism agenda is fantastic, but it is slightly different to co-production.

[159]   On funding, in practice, what funding sources are available to libraries, particularly community-managed libraries, other than the standard local authority budgets? To what extent, if any, is there the opportunity, while safeguarding free services—not only books, but digital services and so on—to generate additional revenues through add-on services or partnerships with other businesses in the community?

[160]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Community libraries are finding it really difficult where they are in a situation where they are not well-supported financially in the authority to make ends meet. So, it is a matter of holding constant fundraising events. The problem with most funding is that it tends to be for a project. It has a beginning, an end, and an outcome. It will not necessarily fund the electricity bill. So, there are some real issues there around sustainability, which is why I go back to that stance around trying to create sustainable partnerships by

bringing in another partner, such as a community council. The other thing about it is that the models that I delivered saved 70% to 75% of the running costs of the site. You could say, 'We'll save 100% and just drop the community in it, and they've got to look after themselves', but actually 70% to 75% savings is pretty good. With the remainder, that helped to make sure that it was a sustainable model that could last into the long term, by having contractual arrangements that meant that they had some kind of income sources. The problem around raising income is that you have a statute that prevents you from charging to lend books. So, the core service has to be free, which I would fully support.

[161]   **Mark Isherwood:** I am only talking about add-on services, protecting core services and digital services.

[162]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Absolutely. What is core? Digital. There are quite a lot of libraries— around 40% of the community-managed libraries that responded to my research—that charge for internet access, and around 20% of the libraries do not give support for people to get online. When you think about the 750,000 people in Wales who are digitally excluded, that is a worry. So, if the digital side needs to remain free, and the books side needs to remain free, what do you have left? It is limited and around the edges. You can hold events and raise bits of money, but, if your core service is free, you are a bit hamstrung with regard to generating large sums of money.

[163]   **Mark Isherwood:** What examples, if any, are you aware of where, perhaps, community-managed libraries have accessed other revenue streams while protecting their core services, including digital services?

[164]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Not many. Typically, funding, as I said, comes from projects. They have delivered fundraising, et cetera, or they have had money from trusts. Sometimes, it depends on the area. There are some community libraries in affluent areas that have had wealthy benefactors, and that is really the luck of the draw. However, I am not seeing very much evidence of community-managed libraries generating income. What is coming through very strongly from my research is a constant concern as to how they are going to keep the library open in the case of those libraries that are not financially supported.

[165]   **Mark Isherwood:** What about pubs, shops, community shops, et cetera? Is there no avenue there?

[166]   **Mr Cavanagh:** One of the things that we did in one of the communities in England was to create a library in a parish council building, and the building had a cafe and pub. We put the library in in such a way that it meant that you had to walk through the cafe to get into it. The idea there was to drive spend. So, there are some models out there and some means of doing it around cafe income, for instance, but they are few and far between; there are not many examples.

[167]   **Mark Isherwood:** Is it something that we should explore?

[168]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Absolutely.

[169]   **Christine Chapman:** We are, again, very short of time, and I know that Peter and Jenny want to come in, and I have a couple of questions as well. Are there any other Members who want to come in, bearing in mind that we are coming to the end? Would you indicate now if you have any further questions, before I move on to Peter?

[170]   **Peter Black:** I would like to add one, very quickly—I had one, but I have two now. In terms of training, I understand that volunteers prefer to be coached on the job, but is there not basic training in terms of health and safety, such as on posture while using computers and

on lifting, and that sort of stuff, which you have to put in place for volunteers?

[171]   **Mr Jewell:** Yes, that is all undertaken. That has happened with us with the volunteer service that we have led.

[172]   **Peter Black:** Okay. Secondly, you have referred to the Welsh public library standards, which have been revised, and how these are helping to, if you like, frame these community-based libraries. In terms of the 1964 Act, which is 50 years old, do you think that it is fit for purpose, or are we able to survive on the basis of the standards?

[173]   **Mr Cavanagh:** Yes, to be honest, I do. It is not perfect, but does it really need all of the time and effort that would be required to change the statute? No, I do not think so. What it needs, though, is something to explain what 'comprehensive and efficient' means. In Wales, we have that in the public library standards, and that is fine. Yes, it talks about gramophone records, and it is a little bit out of date, but, if we change it to talk about the internet, in 50 years' time the internet will probably sound as old as gramophones do now. So, we cannot necessarily futureproof things.

[174]   **Christine Chapman:** What is a gramophone? [*Laughter.*]

[175]   **Jenny Rathbone:** About 25% of the population uses libraries in some shape or form. We are proud of the fact that library use went up in Wales in the last available statistics, in contrast to England, where it has gone down. Do you think that this co-production approach can be a way of encouraging more people to use library services?

[176]   **Mr Jewell:** The example we have, which is the only example I can relate, is that that is not the case. There is a decline in use at Pontyates library.

[177]   **Mr Cavanagh:** The evidence is mixed, from my experience. An example would be Lewisham, which changed to community management and saw the bottom completely fall out of its performance. It dropped by about 90% in the first year, although it may have recovered since then. However, you have other community-managed libraries, like the famous triumvirate in Buckinghamshire of Little Chalfont, Chalfont St Giles and West Wycombe, which, by their own reports, are doing better now, performance-wise, than they were when they were county-managed. So, it is a real mixed bag. It has the potential to grow audiences, but does not always do that.

[178]   **Jenny Rathbone:** It sounds like that is related to affluence.

[179]   **Mr Cavanagh:** It could well be.

[180]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Those are very rich areas, but Lewisham is not. Okay, so those are the warning signals for us. Thank you.

12:00

[181]   **Christine Chapman:** I have two specific questions. Could I ask whether you think that local authorities in Wales have worked with groups such as the Wales Council for Voluntary Action to improve the experience of volunteers in libraries in Wales? Are you working with the WCVA on this?

[182]   **Jocelyn Davies:** Is that where we get our retired women from to run libraries? [*Laughter.*]

[183]   **Mr Cavanagh:** I think that some authorities may be doing that; they will probably be

starting to do so. I guess that one of the issues is that, if it is anything like Volunteering England, there may be an issue around the replacement of staff with volunteers, because that is something that Volunteering England is absolutely against, so whether it will engage on those terms, I am not sure, but I imagine that local authorities will engage.

[184]   **Christine Chapman:** The other question that I have, the final question, because we will be asking the Minister this as well, is whether you think that there is sufficient Welsh guidance relating to community-managed libraries? Do you think that there is enough guidance on this?

[185]   **Mr Cavanagh:** I think that that comes back to what I was saying before: you have the public library standards, but they are service standards. I strongly believe that we need site standards. It does not have to be a big, complex piece of work, but we need some direction and some consistency so that we can be sure that we do not have a postcode lottery of service provision, where some libraries think that the vision is this and some think that it is that. We need some standards, and that is where the Welsh Government could really add value to this.

[186]   **Christine Chapman:** So, you think that it is the Welsh Government's responsibility—

[187]   **Mr Cavanagh:** I do, because it is the responsibility for the whole country, and it is about raising standards consistently across the whole country. That needs to be a Government approach.

[188]   **Christine Chapman:** Are there any other comments or observations at all?

[189]   **Mark Isherwood:** What scope is there for partnership with post offices?

[190]   **Ms Davies:** If I may come in here, we tried to run that model in Carmarthenshire. It was not for a lack of desire to enter into a partnership with the post office that it failed, it was just the circumstances around the potential move, but I think that there is scope for a partnership with post offices, because what it gives you is an opportunity to bring additional footfall in through the library service, as well as the community being able to benefit from having all those services on the one site.

[191]   **Christine Chapman:** If there are no other responses, may I thank all of you for coming today? It has been a very interesting session and it will certainly help us in our report on this inquiry. So, thank you very much for attending. We will send you a transcript of the meeting, so that you can check it for factual accuracy.

12:02

Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note

[192]   **Christine Chapman:** Finally, I want to tell Members that there are a number of papers to note and that the next meeting will take place next Thursday, 13 March. I will now close the meeting.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:02.
The meeting ended at 12:02.